

## **California Department of Social Services Summary of Residentially Based Services (RBS) Reform Project Demonstration Site Performance in Calendar Year 2011**

### **Snapshot of 2011:**

This paper provides a look at demonstration site performance in Calendar Year (CY) 2011 only. Technical issues with the data and the short period the project has been operating make it ill-advised to form conclusions at this time about overall program performance and client outcomes. Moreover, this snapshot contains no discussion of fiscal data for two reasons. First, by constraining the use of State General Fund, realignment effectively eliminated the concern that the RBS project must maintain cost neutrality/cost containment with respect to Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) expenditures. Second, implementation of realignment has caused problems and delays in issuing county claiming instructions and tools which, in turn, have prevented counties from timely completion of fiscal portions of the County Annual Reports (CAR).

Following are the key observations which can be made from data reported by the demonstration sites:

- Approximately, 178 youth were served during CY 2011. The “typical” RBS youth was a 13 year old, African American, male who was placed into care by the county child welfare agency.
- Of all youth active in the RBS program in 2011, 88% participated in at least 90% of their care coordination team meetings.
- Of the youth enrolled in the RBS program long enough to meet or exceed the targeted average stay in RBS group home residential placement, 53% exceeded the target in San Bernardino by an average of 1.8 months; 58% exceeded the target in Los Angeles by an average of 2.1 months; 39% exceeded the target in Sacramento by an average of 3.2 months; and 54% exceeded the target in San Francisco by an average of 2.5 months.
- Over 40% of all youth stepped down from RBS group residential care to lower levels of care. Of those youth who stepped down, 90% remained in a lower level of care, while 10% returned back to RBS group residential care.
- During CY 2011, 21% or 37 youth exited the RBS program. Of those who exited, 24% graduated<sup>1</sup>, 6% emancipated, 19% exited voluntarily, and 51% exited for other reasons. Of the 37 youth who exited the RBS program, 5% or 2 youth later returned to RBS care.
- All four demonstration sites were structured and operating in accordance with their originally approved program and funding models in CY 2011.
- The majority of the demonstration sites reported the following three critical lessons learned: (1) the need to conduct appropriate screening and referral of

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<sup>1</sup> For data collection purposes, the exit code “graduation” is used when a youth disenrolls from RBS due to substantial progress and/or completion of the program such that the youth’s care coordination team has determined that RBS is no longer needed.

youth; (2) the need to provide early and aggressive family finding and engagement; (3) the need to develop step-down placement options.

## **Background:**

The RBS Reform Project was established in response to growing frustration with the shortcomings of the existing foster care group home system. Assembly Bill (AB) 1453 (Soto, Chapter 466, Statutes of 2007), amended by AB 2129 (Bass, Chapter 594, Statutes of 2010), authorized a multi-year pilot demonstration project to eventually transform group home foster care into a system of RBS programs that would reduce the length of time in congregate care and improve permanency outcomes for youth. This would be accomplished by combining short-term, intensive, residential treatment interventions with community-based services aimed at reconnecting foster youth to their families and communities. The goal of RBS was to accomplish this without increasing costs to the AFDC-FC program by producing savings from reduced lengths of stay in high cost group care to off-set increased up-front costs.

The pilot project was implemented in San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Francisco Counties on a staggered basis. San Bernardino served its first youth in June 2010; Sacramento in September 2010; Los Angeles in December 2010; and San Francisco in March 2011. As of this writing, the San Bernardino and Sacramento pilots are scheduled to end in December 2012 with Los Angeles and San Francisco scheduled to end in December 2014.

Each pilot demonstration site provides the following basic RBS services:

- Aggressive family engagement and active involvement of youth and family in case planning and decision-making;
- Portable, multi-disciplinary, care coordination team that follows the youth throughout enrollment despite placement changes;
- Environmental interventions in group care to stabilize behavior;
- Intensive treatment interventions in group care;
- Crisis stabilization<sup>2</sup> services;
- Parallel community interventions and services to prepare for and support the youth's return to the community;
- Follow-up after care services and support to successfully maintain the youth in the community.

Within this framework, each site is testing a unique RBS program design and funding model. Target populations vary by site. For example, San Bernardino selects youth with multiple placement failures, while Sacramento focuses on youth with no more than one group home placement. All sites serve youth in or at risk of being placed in Rate Classification Level (RCL) 14 group homes, while three sites serve youth in or at risk of

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<sup>2</sup> "Crisis stabilization" refers to the youth's return to group care from a lower level placement for less than 14 days when needed to defuse a crisis situation and stabilize a youth in order to support the youth's success in the lower level placement.

being placed in RCL 12 and 13 as well. Over 24 months, the four sites will serve approximately 300 children with projected numbers per site ranging from 30 to 160. Depending on the specific pilot program design, short-term intensive residential services are provided for an average of five, nine or 12 months, followed by lower cost placement in the community and/or placement into a permanent home for an average total of 18, 21 or 24 months of services. Funding streams and provider payment rates vary by site as well, with group home payment rates ranging from \$8,031 to \$11,000 per youth per month.

### **Data Collection and Reporting:**

Pursuant to statute, pilot demonstration sites prepare annual reports or CARs to describe and evaluate client outcomes, involvement, and satisfaction; county and provider use of the program; county payments, provider costs, and their impact on AFDC-FC; and lessons learned. To facilitate this reporting, the Department of Social Services, with input from the sites, developed a structured set of questions and data tables for completion. This CAR template was redesigned for 2011 and an Excel worksheet, titled RBS Days of Care Schedule, was added to report individual youth placement progress and use of crisis stabilization. Data used in the reports is derived from several sources, including the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment–Child Welfare (CANS-CW), Youth Services Survey (YSS), Youth Services Survey for Families (YSS-F), provider cost reports, and county claims.

This report of demonstration site performance is based on the CARs submitted for CY 2011 by the four pilot sites.

### **Data Limitations:**

- The total RBS client population active in CY 2011 is small.
- The RBS pilot project was designed to run over a 24-month cycle. As of the end of CY 2011, none of the sites had completed a full cycle.
- Case counts in CWS/CMS and the CARs and Days of Care Schedules do not match consistently. This makes comparisons of data items among all four sites less useful.
- Although it is a standardized assessment tool, the CANS-CW may be modified for local purposes. To minimize workload impacts, pilot sites were permitted to continue to use their individual versions for RBS clients.
- Due to the limited number of follow-up YSS and YSS-F data available for CY 2011, analysis of changes between initial and follow-up surveys cannot be made.

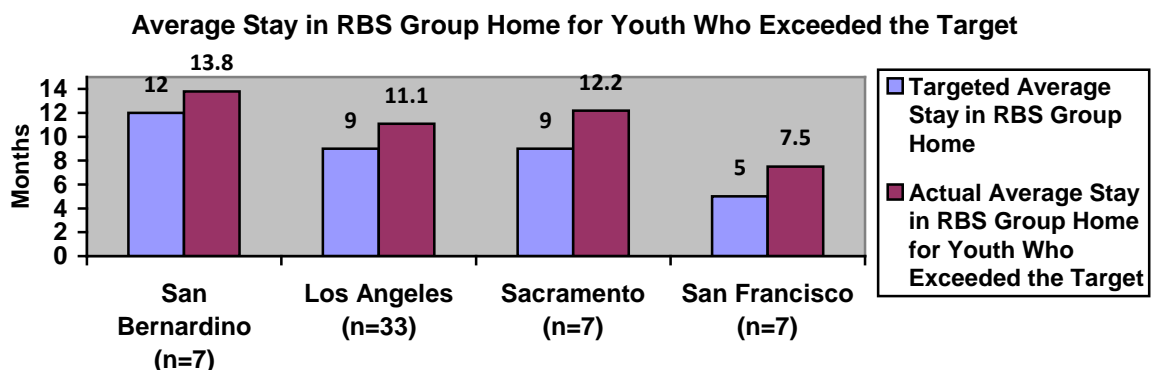
### **Client Demographics:**

- A total of 178 youth were served during CY 2011 with 103 served in Los Angeles, 29 in Sacramento, 25 in San Bernardino, and 21 in San Francisco.
- Of youth served, 73% were male and 27% were female.

- The average age of the youth served was 13 in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and 16 in San Bernardino and Sacramento.
- Of the youth served in CY 2011, the largest group was African American (45%) with almost equal numbers of Caucasian and Hispanic youth (23% and 24%, respectively).
- RBS youth were predominately placed by child welfare agencies (89%) with only 11% placed by probation agencies. In two sites, Los Angeles and San Francisco, all RBS project placements were made by the county child welfare agency.

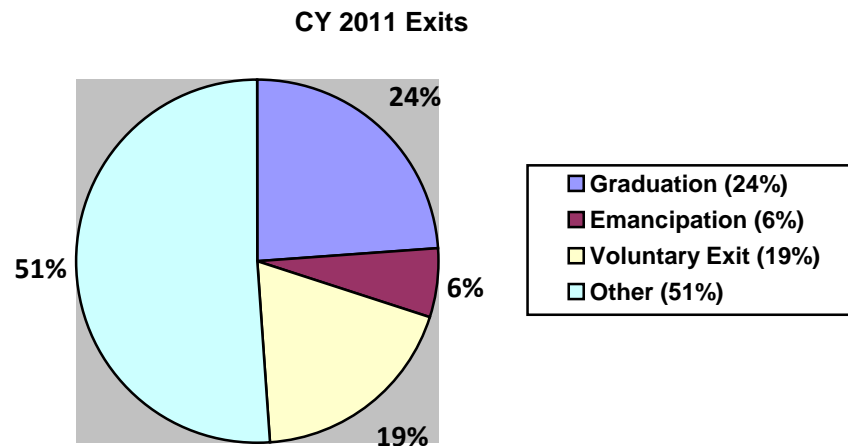
### Progress Indicators:

- CANS-CW data from the four demonstration sites show that children demonstrated some improvement in follow-up assessments compared to initial assessments in the areas of functional status, risk behaviors, child safety, educational progress and mental health.
- The targeted average length of stay in RBS group home residential placement varies across the demonstration sites with a 12-month average in San Bernardino, 9-month average in Los Angeles and Sacramento and a 5-month average in San Francisco. Of the youth enrolled in the RBS program long enough to meet or exceed the targeted average stay in RBS group home residential placement, 53% exceeded the target in San Bernardino by an average of 1.8 months; 58% exceeded the target in Los Angeles by an average of 2.1 months; 39% exceeded the target in Sacramento by an average of 3.2 months; and 54% exceeded the target in San Francisco by an average of 2.5 months. The following displays the actual average length of stay in RBS group home residential placement for youth who exceeded the target compared to each demonstration site's targeted average.

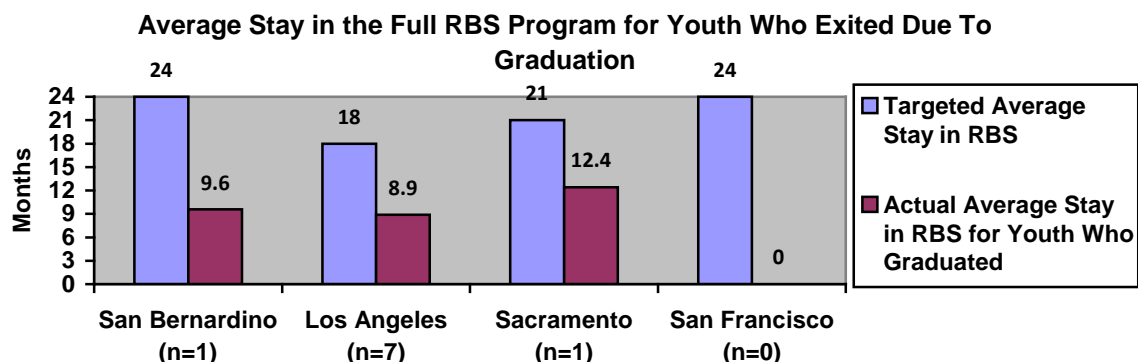
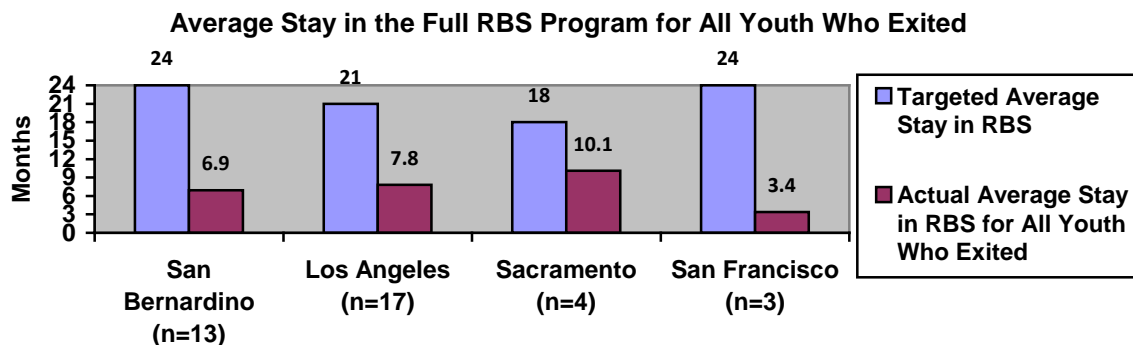


- Of the 74 youth who stepped down from RBS group residential care to lower levels of care, 90% remained in a lower level of care, while 10% returned back to RBS group residential care.

- During CY 2011, 21% or 37 youth exited from RBS as follows:



- The targeted average length of stay in the full RBS program<sup>3</sup> also varies across the demonstration sites with a 24-month average in San Bernardino and San Francisco, 21-month average in Los Angeles, and an 18-month average in Sacramento. The following table displays the average stay in the full RBS program for youth exiting RBS compared to the targeted average stay in the full RBS program per site:



<sup>3</sup> The "full RBS program" refers to placement and services in both the group home residential setting and in the community setting.

- Of all 37 youth who exited the RBS program, 5% or 2 youth later returned to RBS care.
- Of all youth active in the RBS program in 2011, 13% utilized crisis stabilization. Of the youth who utilized crisis stabilization, the average number of crisis stabilization episodes was 1.7.

#### **Client Satisfaction & Involvement:**

- Summary scores from the initial YSS and YSS-F surveys indicated positive perceptions from both youth and family in the areas of satisfaction with services, child and family voice and choice, and well-being. Family perceptions were more positive than youth perceptions in all three categories.
- Of all youth active in the RBS program in 2011, 88% participated in at least 90% of their care coordination team meetings; 84% of youth had a least one supportive adult with 81% of the supportive adults participating in the meetings.

#### **Program Delivery:**

- All RBS demonstration site programs were structured to provide the basic RBS services listed above in the “Background” section.
- As reported by the demonstration sites for CY 2011, there were no significant changes from the program and funding models contained in each county’s memorandum of understanding.
- All RBS demonstration sites’ inter-agency collaboration and oversight structures were reported to be working well.

#### **Lessons Learned:**

- Three of the demonstration sites reported that a screening and referral process is critical to identify appropriate referrals to the RBS program. Demonstration sites are working to modify their existing screening and referral processes to ensure appropriate youth are referred to the program.
- Three of the demonstration sites emphasized the importance of early and aggressive family finding and engagement as a key component of a successful permanency planning process.
- Two demonstration sites commented about problems with the availability of step-down placements, such as Intensive Treatment Foster Care and foster family homes, and the need to develop them.